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ENG 2011G-001: Literature, the Self and the World: Fiction

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SYLLABUS
English 2011G Section 001, Spring 2007
Literature, the Self and the World: Fiction
 MWF 9:00-9:50, Coleman 3170, EIU

Professor: Dr. Letitia L. Moffitt
 Office: Coleman Hall room 3821
 Office Hours: MWF 10:00-10:50am and 1:00-1:50pm, or by appointment
 E-mail: llmoffitt@eiu.edu (for questions only; do not e-mail assignments without my permission)

Objectives

How well do we know ourselves? How well do we know the world around us? No matter who we are, we only ever perceive things from a single point of view—our own. As such, might that mean we never really see a complete or “true” view of the world—or ourselves? Can one person’s vision ever be a “true” vision? If all views are relative, what, if anything, is “true”? In this class we will look at a wide range of prose fiction that evokes these same questions—that is to say, stories and novels that ask how much of our identity and perception comes from within ourselves, how much is imposed upon us from the world outside, and how we negotiate discrepancies between these in terms of determining what is “real” and what is “relative.”

The course will place particular emphasis on *how* these works of fiction are written and not simply what they are about—that is, how the “how” relates to the “what” (to put it in somewhat more confusing terms). Think of it this way: Picasso created two-dimensional paintings of three-dimensional figures in a way that was not “realistic” (in that they did not resemble “real” people), yet a viewer could behold multiple views of the figures at once, rather than just a single flat view. Given that people can in fact be viewed in multiple ways, one might say that Picasso’s works were actually *very* realistic. How do you accomplish the same thing in a story? Stay tuned...

Texts

In the order we will be using them (always be sure to bring the current text to class):

- Mark Winegardner, ed., *3X33: Short Fiction by 33 Writers*.
- Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*.
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.

Grading Breakdown

Paper #1, due Monday, February 5	20%
Paper #2, due Friday, March 9	20%
Paper #3, due Monday, April 9	20%
Final Exam, on Monday, April 30	20%
Reading Quizzes, daily	10%
Participation, daily	10%

Papers

Format: All papers must be typed and printed in readable font (12 pt. Times New Roman or equivalent), normal margins (1 inch top and bottom, 1.25 inches left and right), double-spaced, your name on each page, all pages numbered, all pages fastened together with a staple (don't do that silly corner-fold-over thing and expect the pages to stay together). Don't get cute with margins or font size in order to stretch a too-short paper. If you are required to write three full pages, and the third page has any amount of white space, or if the paper fills three pages with a lot of repetition and "fluff," that won't be considered three full pages. If you run out of things to say before you reach the minimum page requirement, you need to do a lot more than just fill up the empty space; you probably need to go back and put more thought into your paper as a whole.

Final papers must be free of hand-written corrections or blobs of correction fluid, and *must* be thoroughly proofread. Give yourself enough time to correct any errors *before* you print the final version. If you have a brilliant paper that is unreadable because of grammatical, punctuation, spelling or typographical errors, no one will know or care that it is in fact brilliant.

I will provide detailed instruction sheets for each paper, but I won't repeat anything that I've already said—that is, I'm not going to tell you every single time that you have to double-space your papers; I'm going to assume that you should have learned that already!

Deadlines: Papers are due at the *beginning* of class on the due date. If your paper is late by one day (that is, if you turn it in during the middle or end of the due date's class, after class, or at the beginning of the following class), your grade will go down one *full* grade level (that is, from A to B, A- to B-, etc.). If you don't hand in your paper at the beginning of the class following the due date, I won't accept it and your grade for that paper will be F. Do not e-mail me papers without my permission, or put them in my mailbox or slide them under my office door or leave them in the classroom if I'm not there, because I might not get them this way unless you have made arrangements with me beforehand. I can't grade a paper that you honestly tried to get to me but somehow got lost; I can only grade what actually exists, *in my hands*, by the deadline.

Important note: I accept *no excuses* for late papers, and I grant no excused extensions—not even for "good" excuses (sick/doctor's appointment/job interview/wedding/funeral). I am especially not interested in technological glitches (printer not working/computer ate my file/no computers available). You have the class schedule in your hands right now, so you know when the papers are due. If you must miss a due date's class, for whatever reason, get a friend to hand in your paper or make other arrangements with me. It is not my responsibility to get your work from you; it is your responsibility to get it to me.

I don't make this rule to be mean, but simply because we are on a tight schedule and it is crucial that you not fall behind. If you do, you may never catch up again. Besides, handing the paper in is the easy part; writing it is the hard part. Don't ace the hard part only to blow the easy part.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of a small number (likely 2-4) of short essay questions covering all of the reading materials for the course. The exam will be open book, open notes. More details will be forthcoming as we get closer to the exam date.

Reading Quizzes

That got your attention, didn't it. Don't worry: this is a *really* easy 10% of your grade—if you do the reading. Each time you are assigned a reading, at the beginning of class I will give a very short quiz based on that reading. The questions will be extremely easy, such that anyone who has read the text all the way through should be able to answer them instantly—but anyone who hasn't read probably won't be able to guess. (There may also be discussion questions on the quizzes; your answers to them won't count as part of the quiz grade, but will form the basis for our discussion of the text and may help your participation grade.) The point, if you haven't figured it out already, is to ensure that you *do the reading*. Students sometimes think reading assignments “don't count” because they don't require you to hand anything in. That would be a mistake: Reading is a crucial part of this class, and you can't possibly pass if you don't read.

Participation

Participation means more than just saying whatever you feel like saying. It is also more than a matter of raising your hand and saying something, anything, just to “get it over with” in order to “fulfill” your participation requirement. Students who come to class on time, listen to others, help and encourage others, ask or answer questions, contribute to discussions, focus on and engage in classroom activities—these are all students who are actively participating in class.

Attendance

I will not take formal attendance for this class. *HOWEVER...!* If you got excited when you read that and figured you could sleep in all semester, think again. In *every* class, we will do something that counts toward your grade, and most of these activities cannot be made up if you miss them. I will not give make-ups for reading quizzes (which you'll have almost every day), for example, and unless you have a time machine, you can't possibly make up in-class activities like group work or discussions. Just because I don't pass around a sign-in sheet or do a “role call” doesn't mean that your absences won't matter. They will matter, believe me.

I maintain this policy for one key reason: The point of coming to class isn't so that you can “get credit” for being in class. Attendance means substantially more than having a pulse. If you show up to class but then take a nap, IM your friends, work on assignments for other courses, talk about things that have no relevance to the class, etc., you might as well have stayed home because you aren't really “attending,” and in fact you may be annoying other students. (Look it up in Webster's: the first definition given for “attend” is “to pay attention,” not “to be present.”)

Sometimes students who miss class want to make it clear that they really, sincerely meant to attend but couldn't because of circumstances beyond their control. I understand this—yet the

truth is, the reason *why* you were absent doesn't matter, because it doesn't change the fact that you still missed what happened in class, regardless of whether you have a "good" excuse and a "note." Understand this: *You don't need an "excuse" if you are absent; you need to keep up with the work.* If you come up to me and announce "I was sick!" and stick a doctor's note under my nose, all I can say is, "Sorry; hope you feel better," because I *can't* realistically say "That's OK, don't worry, it won't affect your grade," given that it *could* very well affect your grade—after all, you are now one class behind everyone else.

So don't worry: I won't dislike you if you are absent, but I will be concerned that you are behind the rest of the class—and you should be concerned as well. Related to this, if you are absent, do not simply ask me "what did I miss" and expect me to tell you in 10 words or less; I can't condense a 50-minute class into one sentence. If you are concerned that you may fall behind because of an absence or absences, come to my office hours and we'll see what we can do.

Again, my point here is *not* that you should slavishly drag yourself to class when you have a fever of 104. It is natural to expect that events may force you to miss class. My point is simply this: attend as many classes as you humanly can (and *come prepared*); if you miss class, for whatever reason, make sure you keep up with the work, and expect there to be consequences that range from negligible (if the absences are isolated incidents) to severe (if you make a habit of it).

Plagiarism Warning

Plagiarism means word-for-word unacknowledged copying of another writer's work *or* unacknowledged paraphrasing of another writer's ideas. This can range from something as small as copying a sentence from a website without properly acknowledging the source, all the way up to turning in someone else's paper as your own. The minimum penalty is a grade of "F" on the assignment. In addition, you may fail the course, be placed on probation, or even be expelled.

The bottom line: absolutely do not for one second consider plagiarizing any part of any assignment, ever. It's simply not worth it. If you are having trouble writing an assignment or meeting a deadline, or if you aren't sure what might be considered plagiarism, please come and talk to me about it.

Final Word

This is probably not the most exciting document you've ever had to read in your life, but please: *Keep this syllabus!* Refer to it whenever you have any questions about the class, because I guarantee you that a good half of the questions that are asked during the course of a semester have already been answered here. Do not let this document somehow fly out of your hands the second you leave the room.

Also, if you ever have questions about anything in this document (or, really, anything at all related to the class), *ask them.* You are responsible for doing what needs to be done in this class; it is not an acceptable excuse for you to say, "I didn't understand what you meant so I couldn't do the work." If you don't understand, find out. That's why you're here, after all!

Grading Criteria for Papers

Purpose:

"A" range: The essay has a clearly focused purpose and is sufficiently narrowed for a short essay.

"B" range: The essay has a fairly clear purpose and, but the writer doesn't always consistently craft the essay toward that purpose.

"C" range: The essay has a purpose, but that purpose may be too broad.

"D" range: The essay has little clear sense of purpose; instead of focusing on a single topic, the essay jumps from one topic to another and makes no clear point.

Reasoning and Supporting Evidence:

"A" range: The writer provides specific, clear supporting details, offering enough evidence to make a point convincingly. The reasoning is valid, and there are no irrelevant details.

"B" range: Reasoning and evidence are fairly clear and appropriate but not always vivid and convincing.

"C" range: The writer's evidence may be too general to fulfill the essay's purpose effectively. The essay may offer a few specific details but not enough to be convincing. There may be a few irrelevant details or flaws in reasoning.

"D" range: Evidence or supporting details are few and possibly irrelevant, and there may be several flaws in reasoning.

Organization:

"A" range: The arrangement of ideas in the essay is appropriate for the writer's subject and purpose. The introduction is engaging; the conclusion is satisfying. Transitions are effective, clear and varied. The reader can easily understand the direction of the essay.

"B" range: The essay is usually easy to follow, though introduction, conclusion, transitions and/or overall arrangement of ideas may be less than completely effective.

"C" range: Some thought has been given to the arrangement of ideas, but supporting points may not be in their best order. Introduction and/or conclusion are present but not well thought out. Lack of transitions may make the essay hard to follow.

"D" range: Organization is confusing. The reader may have great difficulty following the essay.

Writing Style:

"A" range: Writing is under the writer's control. Wording is thoughtful, varied, and precise. The writer has obviously edited and proofread, and there are few if any grammatical, punctuation, spelling or typographical errors.

"B" range: Writing is competent, perhaps not varied and accurate enough for the "A" range, but effort is there.

"C" range: Wording is generally correct but "bland," or perhaps the essay contains exaggerated language, wordy structures, or clichés. The essay also likely contains errors of grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling.

"D" range: Essay bears the clear markings of something the author dashed off without giving sufficient thought (typos, grammatical mistakes, redundancies).

F papers: An "F" assignment either doesn't exist (meaning that the writer didn't turn it in on time as specified), or did not meet any of the minimum requirements of the assignment, or was plagiarized (in part or in whole).

Note #1: An "A" grade is the top grade that can be achieved and does not simply reflect good effort; it reflects a combination of strong effort and superlative results. There are no "easy A" grades.

Note #2: All grades are final. I do not negotiate grades.

Note #3: I don't allow extra credit. Everything we do in this course goes toward the learning objectives, so "extra credit" would be pointless.

General Schedule (*subject to change as necessary*)

Date	What we'll do in this class	What you'll do at home for next class
Mon., Jan. 8	Introductions; syllabus	Read Diaz, "The Sun, the Moon, the Stars"
Wed., Jan. 10	Narrative	Read Jen, "Who's Irish?"
Fri., Jan. 12	Narrative	Read Moore, "How to Become a Writer"
Mon., Jan. 15	<i>Holiday; no class</i>	
Wed., Jan. 17	Narrative	Read Cheever, "The Swimmer"
Fri., Jan. 19	Narrative	Read O'Brien, "The Things They Carried"
Mon., Jan. 22	Point of view	Read Wolff, "Hunters in the Snow"
Wed., Jan. 24	Point of view	Read Wolff, "The Rich Brother"
Fri., Jan. 26	Point of view	Read Carver, "What We Talk About..."
Mon., Jan. 29	Point of view	Read O'Connor, "Everything that Rises..."
Wed., Jan. 31	Point of view	Read O'Connor, "Good Country People"
Fri., Feb. 2	Point of view	Work on Paper #1
Mon., Feb. 5	Paper #1 Due	Read O'Brien, "Half Gone"
Wed., Feb. 7	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Diaz, "Ysrael"
Fri., Feb. 9	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Diaz, "Fiesta, 1980"
Mon., Feb. 12	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Butler, "Jealous Husband..."
Wed., Feb. 14	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Butler, "This Is Earl Sandt"
Fri., Feb. 16	<i>Holiday; no class</i>	
Mon., Feb. 19	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Butler, "A Good Scent..."
Wed., Feb. 21	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Carver, "Are These Actual Miles?"
Fri., Feb. 23	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Carver, "Cathedral"
Mon., Feb. 26	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Moore, "You're Ugly Too"
Wed., Feb. 28	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Jen, "Birthmates"
Fri., Mar. 2	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Cheever, "Goodbye, My Brother"
Mon., Mar. 5	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Read Cheever, "The Country Husband"
Wed., Mar. 7	Mirroring/projecting/metaphor	Work on Paper #2
Fri., Mar. 9	Paper #2 Due	Read Moore, "People Like That..."
Mon., Mar. 12 through Fri., Mar. 16	<i>Spring break; no class</i>	
Mon., Mar. 19	Metafiction and relativity	Read O'Brien, "Sweetheart..."
Wed., Mar. 21	Metafiction and relativity	Read James, <i>Turn of the Screw</i>
Fri., Mar. 23	Metafiction and relativity	Read James
Mon., Mar. 26	Metafiction and relativity	Read James
Wed., Mar. 28	Metafiction and relativity	Read James
Fri., Mar. 30	Metafiction and relativity	Read Stevenson, <i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>
Mon., Apr. 2	Metafiction and relativity	Read Stevenson
Wed., Apr. 4	Metafiction and relativity	Read Stevenson
Fri., Apr. 6	Metafiction and relativity	Work on Paper #3
Mon., Apr. 9	Paper #3 Due	Read Austen, <i>Pride & Prejudice</i>
Wed., Apr. 11	Multiple techniques/themes	Read Austen
Fri., Apr. 13	Multiple techniques/themes	Read Austen
Mon., Apr. 16	Multiple techniques/themes	Read Austen
Wed., Apr. 18	Multiple techniques/themes	Read Austen
Fri., Apr. 20	Multiple techniques/themes	Read Austen
Mon., Apr. 23	Multiple techniques/themes	Read Austen
Wed., Apr. 25	Multiple techniques/themes	Prepare for final
Fri., Apr. 27	Evaluations/prepare for final	Prepare for final
Final Exam: Monday, April 30, 8:00-10:00am		